

## Barbara Stellmach

Fryer Library received the sad news of the death of Barbara Stellmach (pictured above) in August this year. Barbara was a long-standing supporter of Fryer Library, which holds many of her works.



She was the author of some 20 plays for theatre, radio and television, and was described by Rod Lumer in the *Companion to theatre in Australia* (ed. Philip Parsons; Currency Press, Paddington, NSW, in association with Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 557) as 'perhaps the most performed playwright in Australian amateur theatre'.

Reviewing her book *4 Australian plays*, published in 1973 by University of Queensland Press, David Rowbotham wrote, 'She is, in her own way, remarkable. She is not only a playwright, she is a writer in that particular style which is both literary and dramatic' (*Fryer Library, Barbara Stellmach, Newspaper clippings concerning Barbara Stellmach and the Villanova Players, 1964-1979, F2213, p. 14, undated The Courier-Mail clipping*).

Barbara was an actor and writer for Villanova Players in Brisbane for many years from the mid 1950s. In 1971 she directed the National Iona Passion Play, and in 1973 she founded Playlab, the Queensland Playwrights Laboratory. She was its president until 1977. Her awards included a Cronulla Arts Theatre Playwriting Competition (1969) prize for *Hang your clothes on yonder bush*, and one from the Society of Women Writers (1976) for *From the fourteenth floor you can see the Harbour Bridge*.

Several playscripts by Barbara Stellmach are held by Fryer Library in the Hanger Collection of Australian Playscripts. The Library also holds a book of poetry by her, *Between the leaves* (Boolarong Publications, Mt Gravatt, Queensland, with B Stellmach, 1991), as well as a scrapbook of newspaper clippings about her and the Villanova Players.



Photo courtesy of Angela Geertszma

## Jani Haenke

Fryer staff were also saddened to hear of the recent death of Jani Haenke. Jani had a number of connections with Fryer Library. As well as being a long-standing Friend of Fryer, she was the daughter of author Helen Haenke and grand-daughter of architect Martin William Haenke, both of whom were the source of significant material in Fryer Library.

Janice Helen (Jani) Haenke (pictured bottom left) was born on 19 June 1940. She grew up at 'Rockton', a nineteenth century villa in Ipswich which is listed in the Queensland Heritage Register. A wing of this house is described in the register as the oldest surviving building in Ipswich. The house was famous for its extensive garden, which Jani and her sister Angela wrote about in an article in *Australian Garden History* (vol.16, no. 5, 2005). 'Rockton' was also the scene of recitals, concerts and play readings, organised by Jani's mother Helen.

Jani lived in Sydney, London and Canberra before settling in Brisbane in the 1980s. She was an ardent lobbyist for the conservation movement, and a supporter of the Australian Conservation Foundation, Australian Rainforest Conservation Society, Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, and the Reef Preservation Society.

She was also a founding member of the Friends of Stradbroke Island. This group was founded in the late 1980s to oppose the redevelopment of a popular cabin resort at Cylinder Beach, and has continued in its efforts 'to maintain the unique characteristics of Stradbroke Island'. After years as a secretary and committee member of this group, Jani was voted to life membership in 1999. Her colleagues wrote that she had 'made a vital contribution to preserving the character and environment of Stradbroke Island' (*Newsletter. Friends of Stradbroke Island* no. 30, April 1999, p. 2).

Fryer Library holds manuscript material from two members of the Haenke family. The first is prominent Ipswich architect Martin William Haenke (1875-1952). An early proponent of the Californian bungalow style in Queensland, Haenke was also successful as a building surveyor, colliery proprietor and industrial chemist. Fryer Library holds fifteen boxes of records from Martin William Haenke, as well as about 280 architectural drawings. Many of the Haenke drawings are exquisitely hand coloured. One of them ('Plans for New Farm residence, 1922') was recently used in Fryer Library's online exhibition, 'Brisbane between the Wars' ([www.library.uq.edu.au/fryer/brisbane\\_bt看/](http://www.library.uq.edu.au/fryer/brisbane_bt看/)).

The works of Jani's mother Helen Haenke are also well-represented in the Fryer Library collection. Helen Haenke was a poet and playwright, and several of her playscripts are held in the Hanger Collection of Australian Playscripts in Fryer. The Library also holds two volumes of poetry by her, *The good company* (Hawthorn, Melbourne, 1977) and *Prophets and honour: poems* (Hawthorn, Melbourne, 1979).

# OBITUARIES